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ABSTRACT

This meta-analysis seeks to provide a better understanding of the relationship between racial orientation and a person's relationship with social institutions. It explores relationships between racial group orientation and four outcome variables: educational achievement, propensity toward criminal activities, indicators of psychological adjustment, and indicators of sociability. The results indicate that the degree to which a person has a positive view of his/her own racial group demonstrates a 38% improvement in academic success, a 50% increase in positive mental adjustment, a 27% decrease in delinquency, and a 35% improvement in sociability. The findings support an earlier meta-analysis (Allen, Howard, & Grimes, 1997) that demonstrates a positive relationship between higher levels of self-esteem and a more positive view of one's own racial group. The findings generate continued support for those arguing for the necessity of maintaining a positive image of one's own racial group as a prerequisite for positive social outcomes. (Contains 54 references.) (RS)

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ABSTRACT

Racial Group Orientation and Social Outcomes:

Summarizing Relationships Using Meta-Analysis

The results indicate that the degree to which a person has a positive view of their own racial group demonstrate a 38% improvement in academic success, a 50% increase in positive mental adjustment, a 27% decrease in delinquency, and a 35% improvement in sociability. The findings support an earlier meta-analysis (Allen, Howard, & Grimes, 1997) that demonstrates a positive relationship between higher levels of self-esteem and more positive views of one's own racial group. The findings generate continued support for those arguing for the necessity of maintaining a positive image of one's own racial group as a prerequisite for positive social outcomes.

Social psychologists assume that a person's identity combines elements of self-creation and social derivation. The identity of a person seeks or requires confirmation by members of the social system that react to that creation or representation (such reactions can serve to disconfirm, deny, or even lampoon). Specifically, Tajfel (1978) describes the second part of identity as, "that part of an individual self concept which derives from knowledge of his (her) membership of a social group(s) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). Regardless of whether group memberships are voluntary or involuntary, a person's evaluations of these affiliations affect the development of one's identity. A person combines those voluntary as well as involuntary memberships and the associated evaluations of those affiliations in developing a sense of self.

Some social scientists, beginning with Horowitz (1939), refer to the social or reactive part of the identity or self-concept as a person's group identity (Cross, 1991). Hence, a person's group identity may be defined as the emotional sentiments that are held toward the groups in which she or he has memberships in addition to the influences of these groups on the development of the self. Cross applied this group identity to racial image and the importance of a person's membership in an ethnic or racial group operates as part of that development of a self concept.

Social scientists continue to examine the relationship between a person's racial group membership (and the psychological evaluation of that membership) and the development of the self-concept. A plethora of scholars have conducted studies using a variety of methods to explore this relationship (Cross, 1991). These studies generally focused on European American (White) and African-American (Black) subjects, particularly children's feelings about racial group memberships and attempted to determine the effect of these feelings on self-concept. The

operationalization of the variables in these studies has been criticized and produced mixed conclusions about the relationship between a person's racial group orientation and his or her self-concept.

Some of these scholars (e.g., Clark, 1979; Horowitz, 1939; Hraba & Grant, 1970; Lewin, 1936,1940) argued that there is a positive relationship between the self-concept and racial group orientation while others suggested that a person could hold a positive self-concept, but feel negatively about his or her group membership (e.g., McAdoo, 1977, 1985; Porter, 1971). Allen, Howard, & Grimes (1997) performed a meta-analysis of African American, Hispanic, and European American studies that contained both a measure of racial group orientation and self-esteem. They found a small, but significant positive correlation for both groups, implying that a person's racial group orientation may have some impact, though not large, on the person's self-esteem ($r = .138$). They suggested that the next step towards understanding the impact of racial group orientation was to explore relationships between racial group orientation and social outcome variables such as educational attainment and delinquency.

This meta-analysis is an extension of that work. Specifically, this meta-analyses explored relationships between racial group orientation and four outcome variables: (a) educational achievement, (b) propensity toward criminal activities, (c) indicators of psychological adjustment, and (d) indicators of sociability. This meta-analysis seeks to provide a better understanding about the relationship between racial orientation and a person's relationship with social institutions. The report of this study is divided into three parts. Part one is a review of literature, including definitions for the major concepts in the study and descriptions of the relationships between the self-concept, racial group orientation, and the outcome variables of

interest in this study. Part two describes the methods and studies used in the meta-analyses. Part three reports the results and discusses the interpretation and implications.

Review of Literature

Self-Concept

Although the terms, self-concept, self-esteem, and identity are often interchanged, these interconnected also have distinct definitions. Berns (1989) articulated these relationships in the following definitions. "One's self-concept refers to one's identity as distinct from others. 'Self-esteem' refers to the value one places on that identity" (p. 431). Accordingly, the self-concept is the way one understands one's self in relationship to others, and self-esteem is how one feels about one's self. In practice, the operationalized measurement of the two variables has generally not been as distinct. The understanding of the relationship one has with others (positive or negative) is strongly connected to the ability of a person to feel positively or negatively about self. The result is that often in the social science literature these terms are used interchangeably, particularly in the context of examining racial group orientation (Allen, Howard, & Grimes, 1997).

Social scientists have long argued that peoples' behavioral choices are influenced by the nature, positive or negative, of their self-esteems (Berns, 1989). "The self concept develops when the attitudes and expectations of others with whom one interacts are incorporated into one's personality, making it possible to regulate one's behavior accordingly" (Berns, 1989, p. 35). Coopersmith's (1967) three-year longitudinal study of children, beginning when they were fifth and sixth graders, showed "significant differences in the experiential worlds and social behaviors of persons who differ in self-esteem" (pp. 70-71). Assumptions about the association

between the self-concept or self-esteem and educational success, substance abuse, and delinquency have been the focus of research and the basis of intervention programs for many years. Many times the arguments for drug abuse, eating disorders, and other problems have been attributed to low levels of self-esteem on the part of the persons involved.

Self-Concept and Educational Success.

Research suggests that a student's self-concept and success in school are related (Brookover, Thomas, & Patterson, 1985; Covington, 1989; Scheirere & Krant, 1979; Wylie, 1979). In Eskilson's study (1986), for example, adolescents who lacked motivation to succeed in school were found to have lower self-esteems, a higher report of deviant activity, and reported feeling incapable of reaching goals set by parents. Gay (1994) argued that learning is a high-risk activity and students are more motivated to learn when they are experiencing feelings of psychological security and positive self worth.

Self Concept, Delinquency, and Substance Abuse.

Furhmann (1990) noted that adolescent delinquency is related to a number of risk factors including low self-esteem. "They frequently engage in delinquent behavior in an attempt to bolster their self-esteem, and such behavior may serve to protect them from conscious feelings of inferiority, but it does not increase their more pervasive unconscious lack of esteem" (pp. 523-524). As such, criminal activities are often a facade covering personal insecurities. Further, Kaplan (1975) suggests that when individuals have low self-esteem and have experienced consistent failures, delinquency may be their way of getting revenge on "the system."

Poor self-esteem in delinquents may stem from problems in their home environments, failures in school, or challenges resulting from socioeconomic status including ethnic and racial

prejudice. Developing positive self-concepts in adolescents is believed to be the most important deterrent to adolescent delinquency (Furhmann, 1990, Kelley, 1978) and interventions used by schools, councilors, and the judicial system focus on building self-esteem (Berns, 1989). Several researchers have suggested a link between the self-concept and substance abuse, particularly among children and adolescents (Block, Block, & Keyes, 1988; Blum & Richards, 1979; Bry, 1983; Jessor & Jessor, 1974; 1977; Kellam, Brown, Rubin, & Ensminger, 1983; Smith & Fogg, 1978). Belcher & Shinitzky (1998) list poor self-image as one the factors related to drug use during adolescence. Other factors listed were, "low religiosity, poor school performance, parental rejection, family dysfunction, abuse, under- or over-controlling parents, and divorce"(p. 3). Schinke, Botvin, and Orlandi (1991) identified low self-esteem as a typical characteristic associated with substance abuse in general. Further, The positive self concept has been identified as a factor which promotes resistance to drug use (Rhodes & Jason; 1990; Werner, 1986) to the extent that many of the drug intervention programs (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous) and therapies focus on building positive self esteem among their clients. The role of positive self-esteem is underscored in research by O'Brien and Biase (1992) who found that low self-esteem was also among a group of characteristics which were commonly found in persons, who were early dropouts from long-term therapeutic communities. A positive self-esteem is associated with avoiding substance abuse and may also be a necessary component of treatment success.

Self Concept and Mental Health.

Poor self-concept is also seen as an antecedent to poor mental health. Berns (1989) argues that mature and mentally healthy adults learn to accept themselves as worthwhile individuals during

adolescence, but this acceptance is influenced by positive socialization experiences in families and schools throughout childhood. Failure to develop positive self concepts may lead to a variety of emotional and mental difficulties depending on the degree of negative feelings and the person's response to those feelings. At a minimum, people with negative self-concepts generally have some difficulties in establishing and maintaining positive relationships with others. Low self-esteem may also be a contributing factor to depression, eating disorders, sexual deviancy, mental illnesses, and suicide (Battle, 1990; Berns, 1989; Bhatti, 1992; Piccinini, 1987).

In summary, research suggests that a positive self-esteem is a contributing factor to educational achievement and mental health. In contrast, low self-esteem is related to school failures, delinquency, substance abuse, and mental disorders. Research also suggests that a person's racial or cultural identity is at least slightly related to developing a positive self-esteem.

Self Concept and Racial Group Orientation

Allen, Howard, and Grimes' (1997) research indicated, there is at least a slight positive significant relationship between the self concept and racial group orientation for Hispanics, African Americans, and European Americans. Further, their results suggested that as individuals begin to identify positively with their racial groups, their self concepts become more positive. While their research suggest that one's racial group orientation is an important part of the self concept, it also suggests that it is not the single or most crucial element of the self concept. However, racial group orientations may be salient to better understanding social behaviors.

Racial group orientation is defined here as the sense of value or feeling that one has toward one's racial group. Children, particularly minority children may develop their racial group identities when they are very young. Porter's (1971) research on children in New England

found that Black children as young as three and White children of four years old had already figured out that white was the socially preferred racial identity. Minority children may also be prone to developing negative racial group orientations. Rosenberg's research (1975) found that when children are racially, religiously, socially, or nationally different from the majority of other children in their environments, their self-esteems are negatively affected. This may be particularly the case when they are taught that their race or culture is inferior through the prejudiced attitudes and acts of others (Wilson, 1978). However, negative racial group orientations may be mediated if adults with whom minority children have salient relationships reject the negative images of the dominant society (Paul & Fischer, 1980).

Griffin (1991) describes the effect of racism on African Americans in particular, using Klein's (1989) humiliation dynamic. "The criminal justice system and the news media play very active parts in the every day humiliations with the accompanying pain, anguish, and sense of oppression experienced repeatedly by members of the African-American community as they watch such biased newscasts" (p. 153). Griffin argues that the humiliation, which African Americans have experienced in the past and continue to experience, comes in two forms, humiliation which results from the negative public attention they receive and humiliation which occurs when they are "made invisible." African Americans experience invisibility when they are dismissed in meetings, not recognized outside of their offices or workplaces, not given opportunities to enter higher levels of responsibility in major institutions, and not included in decision making processes. They also experience invisibility when law enforcement ignores alarming increases in crimes which victimize more African Americans than other ethnic and racial groups and in the lack of positive press attention they receive for their art, literary, and

dramatic achievements.

Public humiliation of African Americans may eat away at the African American self-esteem at both the individual and the community levels. "The ultimate result . . . is that one believes that all those like oneself are inherently worthless" (Griffin, 1991, p. 159). Other minority groups also experience the humiliating effects of racism on their community and individual levels of self-esteem. Although the effects of the corresponding negative racial group orientations may be mediated if the adults with whom minority children have salient relationships reject the negative images of the dominant society (Paul & Fischer, 1980), many minority groups members react to racism by adopting self-destructive behaviors.

Educators and councilors have operated under the assumption that negative racial group orientations and social problems such as failure in school and delinquency are related. In response to this assumption, the focus and activities of many intervention programs for increasing educational success and reducing crime among minority group members is on building positive racial group orientations among children.

Racial Group Orientation and Educational Success.

Cultural and racial differences may negatively affect the educational experiences of some children. The National Assessment of Educational Programs (NEAP) has indicated that many minority children and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds achieve below average scores for mathematics and language on the national level. Further, "the longer some children stay in school, the greater the discrepancy between their educational performance and that of white and middle class students" (Bowman, 1994, p. 1). Failure of minority children to achieve in school is a serious challenge for educators.

Gay (1994) notes that although teachers try to treat all children equitably, "A person's humanity cannot not be isolated or divorced from his or her culture or ethnicity. One cannot be human without culture and ethnicity, and one cannot have culture and ethnicity without being human" (p. 6). Failure to understand cultural influences on their own and their students' behaviors, may negatively influence educators' ability to teach and have negative ramifications for their students' attitudes toward education and their self-esteems. For example, the failure of teachers to understand some African American cultural styles, may contribute to their erroneous perspectives of their students' critical thinking and reasoning skills (Gay, 1994

For many African American students the school environment may feel hostile or uncomfortable because they feel that they are misunderstood and devalued there. These feelings can inhibit their abilities to successfully learn and participate in school (Bowman, 1994; Gay, 1994). In fact, many minority children are caught in the paradox between valuing their racial backgrounds, thereby connecting with family and friends, but disavowing the educational experience; or accepting the educational culture and experiencing emotional or social isolation (Bowman, 1994; Ogbu, 1992).

One response to this paradox, an Afrocentric approach to education has been advocated by some scholars (e.g., Asante, 1991/1992). Undergirding this approach, is the argument that in order for African American students to develop the necessary self-esteem to function successfully in school, they must develop a positive racial group orientation. To encourage the development of positive racial group orientations, educators develop programs for their students who teach them about African American history and culture.

Racial Group Orientation and Delinquency.

Griffin (1991) argues that the effects of racism contribute to negative group orientations among racial and ethnic minorities. These negative group orientations are frequently acted out in the form of self-abusive behaviors, particularly among young men. Additionally, some young minority women may chose teenage parenthood as a way to respond to racism. (Griffin, 1991). Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and violence are typical self-abusive behaviors.

Minorities with negative racial group orientations may engage in violent behaviors which victimize the members of the dominant group out of anger and frustration, and to get revenge for injustices and their feelings of inferiority (Allport, 1979). It may be that acting out criminal behaviors gives minority group members at least a temporary sense of control or power. Ironically, violent behaviors and other criminal activities are more frequently directed toward members of one's minority group.

Allport (1979) contends that aggression towards one's own group may be a result of self-hate or one's negative feelings towards one's group members because they possess the characteristics that society despises. Aggression towards other members of one's own group may be motivated by perceptions that these individuals are attempting to assimilate into the dominant culture, or because they have adopted a different set of tactics for dealing with racism. Substance abuse behaviors, particularly alcohol abuse, are also self-destructive behaviors which minorities may engage in as a response to negative racial orientations.

Delinquency indicates behavior for adolescents that would not typically be considered illegal for adults. Delinquency is often associated with drug use, vandalism, and truancy. While more whites are users of hard drugs, minority group youth have more problems related with alcohol use. However, when other risk factors are considered in examining substance abuse, no

causal relationship between race and culture and substance abuse is found (Furhmann, 1990). However, racism has been identified as a correlate of addiction as have feelings of powerlessness and alienation (Belcher & Shinitzky, 1998). All three of these factors may be influences associated with negative racial group orientation.

Racial Group Orientation and Mental Adjustment

Mental adjustment refers to the ability of an individual to not experience unwarranted anxieties, depression, suicidal thoughts, as well as to a general sense of well being. The issue with racial group orientation is that part of the view of a person about the self as positive should come from a view of a positive image of one's own racial group. The acceptance and endorsement of the self (including ethnicity and culture) should provide a more stable and positive picture of mental h

The National Advisory Mental Health Council (1995) reported that race and ethnicity are major factors for explaining mental and physical illnesses and psychosocial dysfunctions. Their statistics suggest that African Americans and Hispanics have higher rates of several mental disorders. These rates are attributed to their lower social economic status, their concentration in more hazardous urban environments, and the psychological effects of discrimination and coping with acculturation and other diversity related issues. For example, for many minority group members, racism is felt daily. While some minority group members may respond in positive ways to this stress by developing greater levels of resiliency, the chronic stress which may accompany the resulting feelings of inferiority, rejection, frustration, and fear may have negative mental health consequences for some minority group members.

Methods

Literature Search

The literature search involved the use of electronic data bases (ERIC, Psychlit, and CommIndex) as well as manuscripts with extensive bibliographies (Allen, Howard, & Grimes, 1997; Cross, 1991). To be included in this analysis, a manuscript had to contain the following elements:

(a) Some measure of racial group identification, the degree to which a person identifies as a member of a particular racial group;

(b) Some measure of social outcome (Academic success, mental adjustment, delinquency, and sociability);

(c) Sufficient quantitative information to permit the estimation of an effect size of the association between racial identification and the outcome.

Manuscripts were excluded for a variety of reasons (including failure to meet the above definition.[1] There were a total of 19 effects generated for analysis in this investigation. Table 1 contains a list of the effects and associated information.

Statistical Procedures

This study used the variance-centered form of meta-analysis developed by Hunter and Schmidt (1990). This procedure takes the statistical information from each study and converts it to a common metric. The correlation coefficient was chosen because of the availability of various statistical programs for analysis and the ease of interpretation of results.

The averaging process for the correlation is weighted by the sample size of each study because larger estimates of the effect contain less error than estimates from smaller samples. The average is then subjected to a homogeneity test that seeks to determine the existence of possible

moderator variables. A significant chi-square indicates the possible existence of moderating conditions that makes reliance on the average effect one that should be treated with caution.

Results

Academic Success

There were nine studies that contained usable information. The average effect indicates a positive relationship between racial group orientation and academic achievement (average r = .160, N=2661, variance = .0027) based on a heterogeneous set of studies, X^2 = 16.51 (8, N= 2661). The results indicate that as the attitude of people towards their own racial group improves, the level of academic success also improves. The finding indicates support for those forms of academic approaches that work at promoting a positive view of one's own race. The only exception to this finding is the Rasheed (1981) study that produced a negative correlation. This study with a small sample size (N=15) had a large amount of sampling error and the size and direction of the correlation could be attributed to sampling error.

Mental Adjustment

After averaging the six studies in this pool a positive relationship between racial group orientation and mental adjustment (average r = .203, N=2379, variance = .0098) existed. The average effect should be interpreted cautiously because the average was generated from a heterogeneous set of studies, X^2 = 31.32 (5, N= 2379).

Delinquency

There were two studies in the data pool that examined this connection. The two studies indicated a negative average correlation (r = -.119, k=2, N=1163). Two studies are insufficient to permit the calculation of a chi-square for a test of homogeneity. The results indicate a limited

data base supporting a connection such that higher levels of positive racial image are associated with a diminishing propensity to engage in delinquent behavior.

Sociability

There were two studies in the data pool that examined this connection. The two studies indicated an average positive correlation ($r = .150$, $k=2$, $N=2000$). Two data points are insufficient to permit the calculation of a chi-square for a test of homogeneity. The average does indicate that sociability increases with a positive racial group orientation.

Conclusions

The findings illustrate a connection between the level of racial identification and the various social outcomes examined in this investigation. Racial group orientation was positively associated with academic success, better mental health, lower levels of delinquency, and a most positive sociability indexes. The results support the continued examination of the connection between racial self-image and various social outcomes. The pattern of results indicate that a positive image of one's own racial group is associated with positive features.

The impact of the correlations are often difficult to assess or understand. Rosenthal (1984) has a simple method called the Binomial Effect Size Display (BESD) to evaluate the importance of the effect of the associations. The method takes the population and assumes that we divide at the median on the basis of one variable, in this case racial group orientation. What percentage differences does that variable make in predicting for the second variable whether a person is above or below the median. A positive correlation indicates that a person above the median on the first variable would be above the median for the second variable. A correlation of .00, would mean no increase at all. See Table 2 for the illustration of effects using the BESD.

For academic success there is a 38% increase in the probability a person with a high racial group orientation will score above the median, for positive mental adjustment this is a 50% increase, and a 27% increase in the probability of diminished delinquency, as well as a 35% increase in the level of sociability. Illustrating the effects using the BESD indicates that a positive racial group orientation can play a powerful role in predicting a number of positive social outcomes.

The question of causality requires an examination of the mechanism and the potential impact that interventions would have on generating more desirable outcomes. Many Afrocentric educational approaches stress positive aspects of an African American identity. The introduction of these materials is designed to encourage the development of a positive view of African Americans. The justification for such interventions is that the needs of the minority students cannot be served by an educational system that fails to provide role models and positive images necessary for education to become effective. These results, while not providing proof for such arguments, do provide evidence for one necessary condition, that is, a connection between racial group orientation and the positive social outcomes sought.

The conclusion of this paper is not for any one version of a racial image to dominate the discussion. Instead, as Cross (1991) points out in the conclusion is that the variability and diversity in "Blackness" as well as any other group requires not the development of a particular image but rather the development of a "positive" image. The derivation of that positive image may come from a variety of sources and be expressed by any number of means. The key is that each person must develop an orientation towards their race that nurtures the positive aspects that generate self-acceptance.

The analysis of cultural artifacts generated by the popular culture as well as social

institutions like the educational system requires continued scrutiny. Given the association between a positive racial image and various social outcomes there exists a basis for concern. The next step in the research, and in this program, is to examine the effectiveness of various methods of intervention to raise the endorsement of the image of African Americans for African Americans. Interventions successful in generating a positive image should demonstrate positive outcomes for the participants. The demonstration of these findings as consistent would begin to demonstrate the casual connection between racial group orientation and successful social participation.

The issue for the educational system is finding ways to generate positive outcomes. Advocates of African-centered approaches to education argue that the basis of this approach is a recognition of the value of African culture which should promote a positive view of the African American racial image. As Cooper and Allen (1998) demonstrate in a meta-analysis of classroom interaction, minority students receive typically 15% less interaction with an instructor than Euro-American students. When considering the valence of the interaction, minority students receive less praise and have more negative interactions with instructors. This probably occurs without any conscious intention on the part of educators, but the results may generate a negative attitude on the part of minority students towards the educational system.

The results of this summary, albeit with a limited number of studies, points to the importance of the identification of an individual on the basis of racial image as a predictor of various social outcomes. Given the consistency of the results, a stronger case for the prediction could be warranted. The understanding of how a person incorporates the image of the groups that one belongs to and the integration with the self-concept and subsequent attitudes and actions

requires further attention and development.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A complete bibliography is available from the first author that lists all manuscripts examined as part of this project.

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Table One

Effects Listed for Each Investigation

Study[1]	Year	Outcome Measure	Sample Size	Correlation
Bowler	1986	Mental Adjustment	552	+.150
Brown	1999	Academic Achievement	94	+.147
Clark	1979	Academic Achievement	210	+.025
Dulan	1975	Mental Adjustment	1000	+.312
		Sociability (Adults)	1000	+.183
		Delinquency	1000	-.097
		Academic Achievement	1000	+.193
		Sociability (Peer)	1000	+.117
Grossman	1981	Academic Achievement	410	+.073
		Mental Adjustment	410	+.021
Hernandez	1984	Academic Achievement	63	+.040
		Mental Adjustment	63	+.150
Meyers	1966	Academic Achievement	45	+.087
Mobley	1973	Delinquency	163	+.252
Rasheed	1981	Academic Achievement	15	-.200
Schmults	1975	Mental Adjustment	44	+.373
Spencer	1981	Academic Achievement	371	+.217
Verkuyten	1990	Academic Achievement	237	+.170

White	1988	Mental Adjustment	310	+.170
		Academic Achievement	310	+.050

[1]First author listed only, see References section for complete citation

Table 2

Binomial Effect Size Display of Average Effects

	Racial Group Orientation		Percentage Increase
	High	Low	
Academic Success			
High	58%	42%	
Low	42%	58%	38%
Positive Mental Adjustment			
High	60%	40%	
Low	40%	60%	50%
Diminished Delinquency			
High	56%	44%	
Low	44%	56%	27%
Sociability			
High	57.5%	42.5%	
Low	42.5%	57.5%	35%

All numbers indicate percentages